

The President's Radio Address

January 19, 2002

Good morning. On Monday, communities across America will celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Laura will visit Atlanta to commemorate the day in Dr. King's hometown. I will welcome Dr. King's family to the White House. This year's observance is an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of Dr. King and honor the principles for which he lived and died.

Americans can proudly say that we have overcome the institutionalized bigotry that Dr. King fought. Now our challenge is to make sure that every child has a fair chance to succeed in life. That is why education is the great civil rights issue of our time.

So my administration worked with Republicans and Democrats to enact into law the most far-reaching educational reform in a generation. We are insisting on high standards for all our children. We're putting a new emphasis on reading as the first step toward achievement. We're offering teachers new training, and States and localities new flexibility. And we're going to measure and test how everyone is doing in our new accountability system, so we can get help to children before it is too late.

We have a special obligation to disadvantaged children to close the achievement gap in our Nation. In my next budget, I will propose an increase of \$1 billion for the Federal program that aids disadvantaged schoolchildren. That's on top of the 18 percent increase in last year's budget. In fact, Federal spending on Title I will increase just about as much in the first 2 years of my administration as it did in all the previous 8 years combined. I hope Congress will approve this request.

At the same time as we fund Title I, we're giving extra help to children with special needs. The Federal program for special needs children was established by the law known as IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. My 2003 budget requests an additional \$1 billion for IDEA, as well, an important increase. But we want these new dollars to carry to special education the same spirit of reform and account-

ability we have brought to other education programs.

This reform effort began Tuesday, when Education Secretary Rod Paige convened the first meeting of the new Presidential Commission on Excellence in Special Education. This distinguished and diverse group, chaired by former Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad, has a clear mission, to propose reforms that will make special education an integral part of an education system that expects all children to reach their full potential.

We must have high expectations for children who are more difficult to teach or who have fallen behind. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would accept no less than an equal concern for every child in America, and neither will my administration.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 1:32 p.m. on January 18 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 19. In his remarks, the President referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-10); and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Public Law 94-142). The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 18 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday Celebration

January 21, 2002

Well, thank you all very much for coming. Mrs. King, thanks for this beautiful portrait. I can't wait to hang it. *[Laughter]*

I want to welcome you all to the White House. We've gathered in tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to the ideals he held and the life he lived. We remember a man who brought much good into the world by the power of his voice and the truth of his words.

For some of you here this afternoon, Dr. King was and is a special part of your life as a colleague and a friend and a brother. Four call him "Dad," and we are pleased that two of his children are here with us today.